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MEMORANDUM REPORT FOR THE SECRETARY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

Central Intelligence Agency has obtained only meager information on current "biological warfare activities and intentions of our potential enemies." We infer that the Soviets are engaged in research and development on biological warfare for such reasons as the following:

1. Unclassified publications in the USA and Britain show that we are engaged in research and development on biological warfare. For example, an article by Jerome Feiner in the current issue of Harper's Magazine discloses some of the biological agents on which we are working and the place where the work is being done. One would expect the Soviets to be developing defensive measures against these agents and to be engaged in offensive research and development on agents against which we would be most vulnerable.
2. Captured German and Japanese documents indicate that the Soviets were engaged in preparations for biological warfare during and before the war. It is probable that such work was continued after the war.
3. There are several hundred scientists in the USSR whose published work in bacteriology, immunology, etc., indicates that they are capable of developing agents for biological warfare.
4. Various scraps of information point in the same direction: rumors of biological warfare installations on islands in certain Soviet lakes; desire of the Soviets to purchase in the USA equipment for the manufacture of penicillin - equipment which could be adapted for the large-scale production of biological warfare agents; failure of the Soviets to send delegates to the recent Congresses of Tropical Medicine and Malaria here in Washington.

We want to know, of course, whether the USSR has installations devoted exclusively to research and development on biological warfare. If they have a central military installation similar to our Camp Detrick, it could be identified through espionage by a combination of characteristics given in our intelligence requirements. However, biological warfare research can be conducted within laboratories normally devoted to medical research. Such work would be almost impossible to distinguish from legitimate biological and medical research. Pilot plant or large-scale production of biological warfare agents might be done in plants that could not be distinguished, except by unusual security provisions, from plants in the legitimate pharmaceutical or fermentation industries. Testing facilities for biological warfare munitions could not be so easily concealed.

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It is of the greatest importance for us to know what agents the Soviets are producing or are prepared to produce on a large scale. Possible agents are so numerous that we cannot prepare specific defenses against all of them. We should know whether the Soviets plan attack against our crops and livestock as well as man and whether by sabotage or open warfare. It seems to us that reliable answers to these questions are impossible to obtain in peacetime unless we should have the good fortune to find a disaffected Soviet scientist, intimately concerned with the program, who is willing to disclose it. We do not count on such a break, for scientists everywhere have shown that they can and do abide by security regulations. The best we can do, therefore, is to be sure that our intelligence requirements are understandable to operatives not specially trained in biology and that they are properly disseminated among those who might be in a position to get some of the desired information.

Dr. Wallace R. Brode, Chief of our Scientific Branch, and Professor I. L. Baldwin, Chairman of the Committee on Biological Warfare, Research and Development Board, recently flew to London to consult with British authorities on biological warfare intelligence. We are assured of full British cooperation in exchange of intelligence. The paucity of biological warfare intelligence from Russia was felt by the British and a considerable portion of the discussion at this meeting dealt with this subject. The British concur in the feeling that our best hope of specific details is thru disclosure by Soviet personnel rather than infiltration of our agents.

Of our own sources of intelligence we find that reports of military attaches and evaluations from the Scientific Branch, Intelligence Division of the Army give us the most useful information on biological warfare developments abroad. Reports of interrogations by agents of the Central Intelligence Agency both at home and abroad are becoming more numerous and helpful.

If we get little information on the activities and intentions of the Soviets in biological warfare, we can at least estimate their potentialities by a study of Russian publications from which we can determine the scientists capable of such research and their changing activities, the institutions in which they are working and the trends of their work. From such information, which will be assembled by this Agency, with the help of its Foreign Documents Branch, useful inferences can be drawn. For example, it is believed that the Soviets might hesitate to initiate open biological warfare because of present deficiencies in their medical and public health services; that is, in their potentialities for defense against our retaliation. We may expect Soviet sabotage, however, and, lacking reliable intelligence, we should prepare now to defend our most vulnerable crops and livestock and key personnel against agents to which our specialists believe they are particularly susceptible.

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The "cold war" preparation of Russia might be slowed down in Russia, with regard to biological warfare, if we should supply Russia, at prices sufficiently low so that internal production was impractical, such biological preparations as serums, vaccines, penicillin, etc. This might deter them from the construction of productive plants for such materials. Such plants would be easily converted to biological warfare purposes and there has been recent inquiry by Russia concerning plant material for production of penicillin.

Signed by hand,

28 May 1948

R. H. HILLENKOTTER
Rear Admiral, USN
Director of Central Intelligence

WRB:FLC/kt

Distributions:

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